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AUTHOR	Tinkler, Barri
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ABSTRACT

The participation of parents in their children's education has positive impacts on school achievement, yet minority parental participation is decreasing. Parents and teachers have different perceptions of what constitutes parental participation. School personnel often misread the reserve, nonconfrontational manners, and noninvolvement of Hispanic parents to mean they are uncaring. In Latino culture, teachers are highly respected and any interference from parents may be considered rude and disrespectful. Schools may consider parental participation to mean formal involvement at school, while Hispanic parents may consider it to be informal support at home. An unwelcoming school environment discourages parent participation. Most educators lack training in teacher-parent relations and overlook opportunities to get Latino parents involved. Communication is key to creating a welcoming school environment. Many school personnel do not speak Spanish, and parents that haven't mastered English have difficulty communicating with schools and helping with homework. Schools could use bilingual materials, hire bilingual staff, provide interpreters, and offer Spanish classes to teachers and English classes to parents. One of the biggest disconnects between school culture and Latino home culture is the idea of working cooperatively versus competitively. Schools focus on competitiveness, and Latino parents prepare their children for a cooperative learning environment. Low educational levels among Latino parents and previous negative experiences with schools in their home countries also prevent Latino parent participation. Schools can help relieve logistical obstacles such as child care, transportation, and scheduling of events. (Contains 34 references.) (TD)

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A Review of Literature on Hispanic/Latino Parent Involvement in k-12 Education

Barri Tinkler

University of Denver
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A Review of Literature on Hispanic/Latino Parent Involvement in k-12 Education

Over the next decade there will be considerable changes in the demographics of the population in the United States. In the last thirty years, "the total number of foreign born residents has tripled" (Gibson, 2002, p. 241). In the state of Colorado, the immigrant growth rate in the last ten years has been 190% (Gibson, 2002). Included in this immigrant population, "Latinos are the fastest growing group" (Gibson, 2002, p. 242), comprising 47% of the population (Gibson, 2002). Latinos are recruited by U.S. industries seeking low-skilled, low-wage labor (Gibson, 2002). Latinos come seeking a better life, and though they may be able to earn more money in the U.S. than they can at home, almost two-thirds live in poverty (Gibson, 2002) and 31% of the general immigrant population has no health insurance (Camarota, 2001). These changing demographics will be of great importance for educators. Within the next twenty years, it is predicted that "the number of Latino children ages 5 to 13 will nearly double, and by 2030 Latino students will comprise one-fourth of the total k-12 school population" (Gibson, 2002, p. 243).

Of primary concern are disparities in academic achievement. Hispanic youth in general are the "most under-educated major segment of the U.S. population" (Inger, 1992, p. 1), and are "more than twice as likely to be undereducated than all groups combined" (Chavkin, 1993, p. 1). Latino students in particular, have the highest dropout rate in the United States (Carger, 1997; Gibson, 2002; McKissack, 1999). Though there are many causes for low academic achievement and high dropout rates among Hispanic students, such as language barriers, low expectations of teachers, poverty, racism, and isolation (Gibson, 2002; Scribner, 1999), the lack of cooperation between

school, parents, and community has also played a role (Scribner, 1999). Moles (1993) has stated that white parents have shown increasing parental participation, while Floyd (1998) has pointed out that low-income minority parents have decreased the contact they have with their children's schools.

Decreases in parent involvement are of particular concern since research has provided evidence that there is a link between parent involvement and academic achievement (Ascher, 1988; Baker & Soden, 1998; Chavkin, 1993; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Epstein, 1996; Floyd, 1998; Petersen, 1989). As stated by Inger (1992), "There is considerable evidence that parent involvement leads to improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates, and that these improvements occur regardless of the economic, racial, or cultural background of the family" (p. 1). In a study of sixteen Hispanic parents in the South who became involved in a leadership program (Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillett, 1998), the researchers found that as parents became more involved in structuring and monitoring homework through a neighborhood center, their children's grades improved and their children showed greater self-esteem (Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillett, 1998). Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990) studied six high schools that were successful in promoting the academic achievement of Latino students. In determining commonalities between these schools, they found that parent involvement played a key role. In a study specific to Latino families in a Midwestern high school, Jones and Velez (1997) found that Latino students who performed well academically reported a higher level of parental involvement with their education at home.

Considering that research has shown a link between parent involvement and academic achievement (Ascher, 1988; Baker & Soden, 1998; Chavkin, 1993; Chavkin &

Gonzalez, 1995; Epstein, 1996; Floyd, 1998; Petersen, 1989), it is important that schools look for ways to engage parents in their children's education. How can schools increase parent involvement and what are the obstacles that they must overcome to get parents involved? We will next turn to research relating to perceptions of parent involvement, barriers to increasing parent involvement, and strategies that have been successful in increasing parent participation.

Perceptions of Parent Involvement

Though research has shown the importance of parent involvement for student achievement, minority parental participation is decreasing (Floyd, 1998; Moles, 1993). Many teachers view this as evidence of lack of interest on the part of parents (Ascher, 1988; Carger, 1997; Floyd, 1998; Moles, 1993). In an ethnographic study of a Latino community conducted by Delgado-Gaitan (2001), the researcher found that 98% of the teachers in the school viewed parental involvement to be very important, but most teachers believed parents were not working enough with their children at home. Teachers often misinterpret non-involvement to show lack of caring (Carger, 1997; Lopez, 2001). As stated by Inger (1992), "Many school administrators and teachers misread the reserve, the non-confrontational manners, and the non-involvement of Hispanic parents to mean that they are uncaring about their children's education" (p. 1). However, research examining parents' perceptions of their role in their children's education has found that Latino parents care very much about their children's education (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001), they have high goals for their children (Shannon, 1996), and they want to be involved (Lopez, 2001). As stated by Trumbulll, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz (2001), "Studies of immigrant Latino

families have repeatedly shown that parents are highly interested in being involved in their children's education" (p. 32).

Part of the discrepancy between the perceptions of teachers and parents lies with the fact that parent involvement is difficult to define. People have different views of exactly what parent involvement is (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999) and these views are culturally variable (Trumbull et. al., 2001). According to Ascher (1988),

> Parent involvement may easily mean quite different things to people. It can mean advocacy: parents sitting on councils and committees, participating in the decisions and operation of schools. It can mean parents serving as classroom aides, accompanying a class on an outing, or assisting teachers in a variety of other ways, either as volunteers or for wages. It can also conjure up images of teachers sending home notes to parents, or of parents working on bake sales and other projects that bring schools much needed support. Increasingly, parent involvement means parents initiating learning activities at home to improve their children's performance in school: reading to them, helping them with homework, playing educational games, discussing current events, and so on (p. 109).

Considering that schools and parents may have different views about what involvement entails, it is not unusual that they may then have different goals relating to involvement (Trumbull et. al., 2001).

Scribner, Young and Pedroza (1999) found through interviews with teachers in high-performing Hispanic schools in Texas that teachers defined parent involvement as

participation in formal activities, such as school events and meetings, or working as a teacher assistant or tutor. This same study showed that parents tend to define involvement as being involved in informal activities at home, such as: "checking homework assignments, reading and listening to children read, obtaining tutorial assistance, providing nurturance, instilling cultural values, talking with children, and sending them to school well fed, clean, and rested" (p. 37). While teachers viewed parent involvement as a means to improving academic achievement, parents viewed their involvement as "a means of supporting the total well-being of children" (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999, p. 37). Since the schools that were studied defined parent involvement as participation in formal activities, parent involvement was measured through attendance at these events. If participation at school events is used as the only indicator of parental involvement, it may not provide a full picture of the contribution of parents.

Gerardo Lopez (2001), who studied a migrant family in Texas whose children consistently maintained a high level of academic achievement, proposes a different definition of parent involvement. Lopez sees the traditional definitions of parent involvement to be exclusionary of marginalized people such as migrant workers. The family he studied, the Padillas, provided evidence of their involvement by the achievement of their children, but they were not involved in their children's education in any of the traditionally defined ways. For the Padillas, their goal was to teach "their children to appreciate the value of their education through the medium of hard work" (p. 420). In order to do this, the Padillas took their children to work with them in the fields and constantly reminded them of the importance of hard work. The Padillas also

consistently pointed out the employment limitations created by a lack of education. The Padillas essentially gave their children a choice "to either work hard at school or work hard in the fields" (p. 420). Thus included in the many definitions of parent involvement is now added the "transmission of sociocultural values" (p. 430).

When considering varying perceptions of parent involvement, not only are there differences in defining involvement, there are also differences in the perceived roles of teachers and parents. In several studies of Latino parents, it was found that Latino parents see a sharp delineation between the role of the school and the role of parents (Chavkin & Gonazalez, 1995). The role of parents is to provide nurturance and to teach morals, respect and good behavior (Carger, 1997; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Espinosa, 1995; Trumbull et. al., 2001). The role of the school is to instill knowledge (Carger, 1997; Chavkin, 1991; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Trumbull et. al., 2001). When parents are asked to take on responsibilities that they traditionally view as the domain of the school, they may be unsure of the role they are asked to play (Sosa, 1997) and they may feel that they are encroaching on the school's territory. In the Latino culture, teachers are highly respected (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995) and any interference from parents may be considered rude and disrespectful (Chavkin, 1991; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Espinosa, 1995; Trumbull et. al., 2001). Therefore, though teachers view parents asking questions about assignments and grades to show caring for their child's education, Latino parents may view this as a sign of disrespect (Trumbull et. al., 2001).

Barriers

Differences in perception are not the only barriers that have to be overcome in involving Latino parents, there are other barriers as well. These barriers can be divided

into five categories: school environment, culture and language, educational level of parents, psychological issues, and logistical issues. One of the first obstacles that many parents deal with is the school environment. Parents may feel unwelcome in the school for a variety of reasons (Chavkin, 1993). As pointed out by Bright (1996), parents often feel anxious, unwelcome and misinformed when they enter their child's school. In a study of high performing Hispanic high schools in Texas (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999), some parents reported that an unwelcome school environment discouraged them from getting involved. The school needs to be aware of these feelings and try to make the parents' entrance into the school as comfortable as possible.

Hyslop (2000) has reported that many Hispanic parents feels intimidated by teachers, particularly if the teachers adopt a condescending attitude (Inger, 1992). The reality is that most educators have limited skills in dealing with parents. A study conducted by the Southwest Regional Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) (Williams 1992) found that only a small percentage of teacher-training institutions in the Southwest U.S. offered course work on teacher-parent relationships. SEDL surveyed teachers, teacher educators, and principals and found that 73 to 83% of them felt that there should be required course work for education students in developing effective teacher-parent relations (Williams, 1992). Since there is not, however, this responsibility falls to the school. The problem is that most school districts do not provide effective in-service training for teachers on parental relations, so teachers have to learn on their own, possibly never learning (Moles, 1993).

Teachers who do not have proper training in working with parents often overlook the opportunity to get Latino parents involved, and sometimes when parents push to

become involved, teachers view them as too aggressive. Shannon (1996) conducted a qualitative study with a Latino mother in Colorado who sought to influence decisions made concerning her daughter's education. The mother had difficulty being heard by her daughter's teacher and the school administration, and felt that the school did not want to respond to her requests because of her low socioeconomic status. The teacher's perception of the parent was that she was "pushy and aggressive—a very unwelcome kind of parent at school" (p. 77). Shannon (1996) pointed to the fact that in middle-class schools, teachers expect parents to be involved and are willing to put up with parent demands. She saw the hypocrisy of teachers decrying the lack of participation on the part of low-income, minority parents, but then being unwilling to accept parents who challenge the status quo.

Another issue that many Latino parents deal with in seeking to become involved in their child's education is language (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Hyslop, 2000; Shannon, 1996). Many school personnel and teachers do not speak Spanish (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Gibson, 2002; Inger, 1992) which can make communication relating to grades, behavior, and homework very difficult. If Spanish speaking parents attend meetings, they cannot understand what is being said (Aspiazu et. al., 1998) and many schools do not provide interpreters (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). Not only do Spanish speaking parents have difficulty communicating within the school, but they are also unable to help their children with homework if the homework is in English (Aspiazu et. al., 1998).

Along with language barriers, there are cultural barriers that parents must deal with. There is a disconnect between school culture and home culture, and schools do not

always seem to value the home culture (Gibson, 2002). One of the greatest differences between the school culture and Latino home culture is the idea of working cooperatively versus competitively. Latino families value what Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz (2001) call collectivism. Collectivism focuses on "interdependent relations, social responsibility, and the well-being of the group" (p. 4) versus individualism which focuses on "individual fulfillment and choice" (p. 4). Since most schools focus on an individualistic, competitive approach, Latino children must adapt their stance to be able to do well academically. In a study conducted by Carger (1996) of a Latino adolescent in Chicago, Carger found that the home environment, which emphasized support versus competition, prepared the adolescent for a cooperative learning environment. However, the adolescent was not often given the opportunity to work cooperatively. Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz (2001) point to the importance of schools developing an understanding of the cultural values that children bring with them. This understanding can lead to a productive partnership between parents and teachers as they will have a better understanding of the goals and expectations that each side brings to the table.

One obstacle to developing educational partnerships with parents can be the parent's level of education (Floyd, 1998; Moles, 1993). School expectations of parents helping with a child's education at home may not be realistic if the parent does not have the requisite skills (Sosa, 1997). It is not unusual for immigrant Latino families to have limited formal education (Trumbull et. al., 2001). This is particularly the case for migrant families who have often had only limited exposure to schooling (Lopez, 2001). In some families where there are older siblings, the older children are expected to help

younger siblings with their homework, which often cuts into the older child's study time (Sosa, 1997). Not only do parents with a lower level of education have difficulty in assisting with home learning, they tend to feel intimidated when communicating with teachers and school administrators (Floyd, 1998; Moles, 1993) and thus may avoid getting involved with the school.

Another barrier to actually getting parents into the school may be psychological issues. Some parents have previously had negative experiences with schools (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Lopez, 2001; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999), either in their own education or relating to their child's education, and may be wary of getting involved. In interviews conducted with Mexican immigrant mothers, Carger (1997) found that many of them had had bad experiences with schooling in Mexico. Some parents, who were unsuccessful in their own education may have feelings of low self esteem and anxiety when entering a school setting (Hyslop, 2000). Even those parents who had positive experiences with education may feel uncomfortable entering the school if they have recently arrived in the U.S. Immigrant parents, who are often dealing with culture shock, may see the school as a foreign environment which they choose to avoid (Hyslop, 2000).

Finally, there are many parents who would like to become more involved, but are hindered by various logistical issues. Lack of time is an issue cited by many Hispanic parents (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Sosa, 1997). This is particularly true for new immigrants and migrant workers who often work long hours (Fuentes, Cantu, & Stechuk, 1996). In families in which both parents are working, or a single parent is trying to deal with multiple responsibilities, parents can become overwhelmed in dealing with daily tasks

and, as a result, have little time left to devote to getting involved at the school or with school-work (Floyd, 1998; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999).

Other issues relate to childcare, transportation, and scheduling of events. For stay-at-home mothers who would like to volunteer at their children's school but cannot afford day care for their younger children, this can be an obstacle (Floyd, 1998; Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1998; Moles, 1993; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999; Sosa, 1997). Appropriate child care is not only an obstacle to volunteering during the day, but it is also an obstacle to attending evening events such as parents conferences. Another limitation to volunteering at the school is the issue of transportation (Floyd, 1998; Moles, 1993). The family may only have one car that one parent has to take to work, making trips to the school difficult for the other parent unless there is easily accessible public transportation (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). Lastly, there is the issue of the scheduling of events and activities (Floyd, 1998). Bright (1996) has said that schools need to be aware of the multiple responsibilities that many parents are dealing with that often rule out daytime participation and schedule events at a variety of times to allow for the possibility for parents to attend.

What is Successful?

While a school district may not be able to address all the barriers to parental involvement, there are many steps that most schools can take that will assist in increasing participation. The first step is to create a school environment that is warm, caring, inviting, and receptive to parents (Scribner et. al., 1999). A key piece of developing this kind of atmosphere is communication (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001) and, according to Chavkin and Gonzalez (1995), communication should be the major focus of parent involvement

efforts. When parents enter the school, they should be greeted. In a study conducted by Scribner, Young, and Pedroza 1999) of high achieving Hispanic schools, one parent said, "They make time to greet you and it makes you feel so much better" (p. 40). "Engaging in small talk" (Scribner et. al., 1999, p.53) is important in the Latino community and is the first step toward building relationships. Another important cultural piece for schools to keep in mind in relation to communication is to make it personal. Latino parents, like most other parents, respond positively to communication that is personalized (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Espinosa, 1995; Scribner, et. al., 1999) either through one-on-one contact or over the phone. Simply inviting parents to come through a personal contact is often all it takes to get them involved (Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Scribner, 1999; Sosa, 1997) and it addresses the concern of providing written materials to parents who may not be literate (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995).

Another way that teachers can personalize communication is through the use of home visits (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Sosa, 1997). In a study of high performing Hispanic schools in Texas (Scribner et. al., 1999), many parents responded positively to home visits. The parents saw the visits as an extension of courtesy on the part of the school, particularly for mothers with children at home and no transportation. Parents also felt that teachers who took the time to conduct home visits showed that they truly cared about their students, which influenced the parents' perceptions of the school. Home visits also allow for parent input. Communication should be a two-way process (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995), and parents' input should be valued (Scribner et. al., 1999; Sosa, 1997). In order to do this, however, the school may have to change the power structure in order to give parents a voice (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001).

Another strategy found to be successful in creating a welcoming atmosphere and developing a communication network is the use of a parent-coordinator, also known as a home-school coordinator or parent liaison (Bright, 1996; Floyd, 1998; Moles, 1993; Peterson, 1989; Ramirez-Smith & Lofland, 1995). A parent coordinator can be particularly beneficial at the secondary level (Scribner et. al., 1999) where parents often have difficulty in determining who to contact. The parent coordinator creates a communication pathway between the school and parents and provides a safe avenue for parents to pursue issues of concern. The parent coordinator often comes from the predominant cultural group among the students of the school, so she or he can be an asset in dealing with cultural and language barriers (Scribner et. al., 1999).

Other ways that schools can improve communication are by sending out regular newsletters to keep parents updated on what is going on at the school so that they can reinforce learning at home (Scribner et. al., 1999) and contacting parents immediately when problems come up relating to their child (Moles, 1993), or if their child is absent (Lucas et. al., 1990). At the high school level, teaching with teams or setting up schools within schools have been successful in creating communication links with parents. Both of these strategies work to create a sense of community, which encourages parent participation (Scribner et. al., 1999).

Besides communication, there are other strategies to assist in creating a welcoming school environment. The school should schedule regular activities and events. These kind of activities create opportunities for positive interactions and shared experiences (Scribner et. al., 1999). The school should seek to make parent involvement interesting, therefore, scheduled activities should be based on the interests of parents

(Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995). In a study of high schools that were successful in working with Latino students (Lucas et. al., 1990), the researchers found that the high schools held monthly parent nights in order to get parents involved. Sanders (1996) also points out that if schools are seeking to obtain greater involvement from fathers, they should plan events particularly for them, such as father and son breakfasts.

In seeking to increase parent involvement, there are several approaches that schools can take to address cultural barriers. One of these strategies is to acknowledge parents' cultural values (Scribner et. al., 1999) and view them as strengths (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995). One way to acknowledge parents' home culture is to incorporate it into the school curriculum (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001). This helps students develop pride in their identity and makes parents feel they can provide valuable contributions (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001). When working with children of migrant parents, the school should recognize that these families bring the strengths of resiliency and resourcefulness which are important attributes the school can utilize (Chavkin, 1991).

Another cultural strength of the Latino community is the nurturance and support of the extended family (Carger, 1997). Schools should build on this strength (Inger, 1992; Scribner et. al., 1999) by inviting member of the extended family to participate (Sosa, 1997) at the school. In a school described by Sanders (1996) that promoted involvement of the extended family, grandparents assisted teachers in monitoring the halls at school. A final important piece in addressing cultural barriers is teacher training. Since the attitudes and practices of teachers and administrators can have a significant impact on parent involvement (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995) it is important that teachers receive training on Hispanic culture (Espinosa, 1995; Scribner et. al., 1999). All of these

strategies utilize the strengths that families bring and help to turn culture into an asset instead of a barrier.

As with culture, language issues do not have to be an impediment to parent participation. For schools serving significant populations of Spanish speaking parents, it is important that all communication should be bilingual. Any written material sent out to parents should be in both English and Spanish (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Inger, 1992; Scribner et. al., 1999; Sosa, 1997), there should be bilingual staff available to talk with parents when they come into the school (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Espinosa, 1995), and interpreters should be provided at meetings and events (Inger, 1992). In seeking to facilitate opportunities for increased communication between teachers and parents, the school should offer Spanish language training for teachers (Scribner et. al., 1999) and ESL training for parents (Scribner et. al., 1999; Lucas et. al., 1990). In a study of six high schools that were successful with Latino students (Lucas et. al., 1990), parents cited Spanish speaking staff as one of the reasons for their involvement. Parents, even those who speak some English, are less intimidated by teachers who communicate with them in Spanish (Scribner et. al., 1999). Along with training in English, there are other educational opportunities that the school should consider providing to parents, such GED classes (Espinosa, 1995; Scribner et. al., 1999) and other adult education opportunities (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995). As parents improve their level of education, they feel more confidence in their ability to contribute to their child's education (Inger, 1992).

In seeking to overcome the logistical issues that parents face when trying to become involved, providing parents with the means to become involved in their child's education at home may be the most economical use of their time (Ascher, 1994; Scribner

et. al., 1999). Hampton, Mumford, and Bond (1998), found that monthly parent workshops provided by the school were very beneficial to parental involvement. These workshops provided parents with knowledge and skills to assist their children with their homework as well as providing supportive parenting skills. In a case study of high performing Hispanic schools in Texas (Scribner et. al., 1999), it was found that successful schools emphasized parent involvement with more informal activities at home. As stated by Scribner, Young, & Pedroza (1999), "This appears to be a key factor in facilitating parent contributions to children's increased academic achievement and social and psychological development" (p. 38). Several other studies have also found that training parents how to help with homework can get parents involved and help to improve academic achievement (Ascher, 1998; Bright, 1996; Peterson, 1989; Ramirez-Smith & Lofland, 1995).

In order to address some of the logistical issues that impede parent involvement, the school should provide child care for meetings and events (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Inger, 1992; Scribner, 1999; Sosa, 1997) and should try to provide transportation when possible (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Inger, 1992; Sosa, 1997). When scheduling events, the school should consult parents about opportune times (Inger, 1992; Sosa, 1997) and should try to schedule events at more than one time period (Sosa, 1997).

Though there are barriers that parents and schools have to overcome to increase parent involvement, there are strategies to overcome these barriers. The importance in overcoming these hurdles lies with the fact that research has shown that parental participation can have an impact on school achievement, behavior, and completion rates (Ascher, 1988; Baker & Soden, 1998; Chavkin, 1993; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995;

Epstein, 1996; Floyd, 1998; Petersen, 1989). Parents have an important role to play in their child's education and the school should seek to facilitate this role. As stated in an interview with a teacher in Carpenteria, California, "I tell them that in any school system there are good teachers, excellent teachers, mediocre teachers, there are bad teachers. All children are going to have all these teachers, but they always have their parents" (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001, p. 107).

Conclusion

In the end, whose responsibility is it to get parents involved? Does this responsibility lie with teachers and the schools, or does it rest with the parents themselves? In a study of high performing Hispanic schools in Texas, Scribner, Young and Pedroza (1999) found that "some staff members tended to think of parent involvement as a parent responsibility to be initiated by parents, rather than as a collaborative responsibility of the entire school community" (p. 38). As Gibson (2002) has pointed out, "educators frequently identify Latino students and their families as 'the problem,' unaware that their own lack of preparedness in working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations is itself a major obstacle and one that needs urgent and sustained attention" (p. 244). One teacher in Texas stated, "It would be nice if parents would initiate involvement more often rather than the teachers always having to contact them" (Scribner, et. al., 1999, p. 37). The reality is that parent involvement must be a collaborative effort. Teachers and administrators need to view parents as integral partners in the academic achievement and well-being of their students and seek to create an environment where parent participation is welcomed and utilized.

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